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APEL: PIPELINE DISPUTE ENDANGERS WESTERN DEFENSE

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[Text] Frankfurt, 27 Aug (DPA) -- Federal Defense Minister Hans Apel believes that the dispute between the United States and Europe over the gas pipeline deal is endangering the West's defense. NATO cannot live with this kind of exacerbation in the long term, he told the German Atlantic Society in Frankfurt today. The gas pipeline deal has become an issue of prestige. "We cannot go on carrying things to extremes. That is intolerable," he said.

BUNDESWEHR GENERAL VIEWS WARSAW PACT CAPABILITY

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[Text] Bonn, 27 Aug (DPA) -- Lt Gen Wolfgang Altenburg, the commanding general of the 3rd Bundeswehr Corps, believes that, given an adequate early warning period, the Bundeswehr and its allies under the forward defense strategy could probably stop an attack by the first strategic echelon, the combat troops, of the Warsaw Pact forces. In an interview, he told the journal DEFENSE TECHNOLOGY that there would be problems if the enemy were able to put his second strategic echelon, that is, his reserves, into the battlefield before the allied divisions could be brought from overseas.

Altenburg, who is predicted to succeed Juergen Brandt as Bundeswehr inspector-general, said the first strategic echelon of the Warsaw Pact are the forces stationed in the GDR, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The forces based in the Western military areas of the Soviet Union are the second strategic echelons. In the event of war, he said, the essential task of the Western air force is not to fight the tanks "in front of my nose" but rather to cut the enemy supply lines.

In Bonn it was learned today that the Soviets have been enhancing for 1 year the striking power of their forces in the GDR. As part of a structural change they have increased the firepower and mobility of their land forces. According to Western estimates, 525,000 Soviet soldiers are now stationed in the GDR as well as 7,100 tanks. Some 2,000 new artillery systems will be added by the end of 1983. At present there are 20 Soviet divisions in the GDR. Competent quarters in Bonn are closely watching the numerical growth of the Soviet forces as well as the steady improvement in the quality of their weapons.

GOVERNMENT 'RESERVED' ON NICARAGUAN MEDIATION

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[Text] Bonn, 27 Aug (DPA) -- Bonn has responded with distinct reserve to the desire by the Nicaraguan junta for the Federal Government to join Venezuela and Mexico in taking steps to secure a peaceful solution to the crisis in Latin America. Daniel Ortega, the junta coordinator, recently announced in Managua that he will request mediation when he visits Bonn at the end of September.

Bonn diplomatic sources said today that the Federal Government has been working for some time together with the United States and all interested countries in Europe for a peaceful solution to the crisis in Central America. In Bonn's view, this can best be achieved by economic cooperation. This conflict should be resolved without the intervention of nonregional forces. The Federal Government is seeking through its contacts, including the coming visit by Ortega, to work for a peaceful settlement.

Against the background of the different assessments taken by Washington and Bonn of the situation in Nicaragua and the role played by the Sandinist junta, the Federal Government is clearly anxious not to upgrade the importance of Ortega's visit.